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BUREAU OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

Research Memorandum RIR-40
November 5, 1962

TO : The Secretary
THROUGH: S/S
FROM : INR - Roger Hillsman

SUBJECT: Brazil and the Cuban Missile Crisis

The impact of the Soviet missile buildup in Cuba was of particular interest to the five Latin American countries maintaining diplomatic relations with the Castro regime. This paper, the first in a series on these countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and Uruguay), examines Brazilian reactions.

ABSTRACT

Despite Goulart's private assurances of full support for the US position, publicly the government line, on balance, favored avoidance of forceful action against the Castro regime. The UN and Cuba Brazil has sought to place mediatory proposals for the denuclearization of Latin America and a favorable Cuba's readmission to the OAS under mutual inspection guarantees regarding subversive action.

Content appears to have badly miscalculated the influence of the Brazilian political groups, since the large majority of the news media, politicians, military officials and the general public strongly favored the US action on Cuba and reacted vigorously against the machinations of the leftist, ultranationalist minority who

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oppose a pro-US policy. Many were extremely critical of the President's fence straddling, and moderate and conservative leaders urged him to take a more forceful stand, including the offer of military assistance, in favor of the US policy on Cuba.

Realizing his error, Goulart may now be seeking to recoup some lost prestige through his efforts in the UN and directly with Castro to play a mediatory role in the crisis. These moves for mediation are consistent with the "independent" foreign policy line on Cuba, the cold war, relations with the United States, and other questions marked out by President Quadros (January-August 1961) and followed subsequently by Goulart. However, under Goulart's leadership, dependent as he is upon leftist and ultranationalist advisers, these policies might well carry Brazil toward an aggressively neutralist role in international affairs and in the hemisphere.

Initial Reactions Favorable

Brazil's response to the Soviet missile buildup in Cuba is best seen through an account of developments during the first ten days of crisis.

When first informed by our Ambassador on October 22 of the Soviet missile buildup, President Goulart was visibly shocked and acknowledged immediately that it represented a radical change in the situation, dictating a shift in Brazil's policy toward Cuba. Fully admitting the threat to US security posed by the buildup, he stated his government's willingness to support the US proposal in the OAS calling for removal of the missiles from Cuba. He likewise acknowledged the need to quarantine Cuba and wondered aloud why even more forceful action was not proposed.

Brazil joined the other Latin American states in voting for the US-sponsored resolution in the OAS on October 23. However, in the paragraph-by-paragraph vote the Brazilian representative abstained on the section recommending that all necessary measures, including armed force, be taken to insure removal of the missile threat to the Hemisphere. He likewise made it clear that Brazil's approval of the resolution as a whole did not mean approval of an invasion of Cuba or of a total blockade of the island. This action precipitated a sharp public controversy in Brazil.

Public Controversy

Brazilian public opinion in general and most news media overwhelmingly supported the US quarantine, and several moderate and conservative spokesmen strongly urged Goulart to give at least token military backing. However, a loud minority of leftist, ultranationalist leaders viciously attacked the US quarantine action as intended merely to finish off the Castro regime. brother-in-law of the President, Leonel Brizzola charged that Brazil's representative to the OAS had violated instructions in voting for the US-sponsored resolution. He called for demonstrations against the US in Brazil, including hostile actions against Peace Corps representatives.

The Communist-dominated port workers labor organization threatened to boycott US ships in Brazilian ports if the quarantine of Cuba continued, and desisted only when warned off by Goulart. The Communist-led National Students Union called on Goulart to cancel President Kennedy's scheduled visit to Brazil in November. However, the Brazilian Communists were obviously shocked by the sudden and forceful manner in which the United States acted, much concerned over the resultant loss of prestige suffered by the USSR and Communists in Latin America, and fearful that any action taken by them and other extremists would result in a further loss of prestige because of general public opposition.

On further thought, he may well have concluded that the US Government would either become involved in a full-scale invasion of Cuba, provoking mass protest movements, or that the United States would have to yield to Soviet pressure, thereby suffering a fatal blow to its position of leadership in the hemisphere. One of Goulart's primary concerns seemed to be the outcome of the January 6, 1963 plebiscite, in which he hopes to poll a substantial majority in favor of returning to the presidential system. He was also apparently convinced that Brizzola, who was elected Federal Deputy on October 7 by the largest vote total (about 260,000) ever received for a deputyship, and leftist ultranationalist elements allied with him could speak for a very significant political group. Goulart may have calculated that if he followed through on his initial impulse toward wholehearted support for the United States in the Cuban crisis, he would antagonize this group to the point of unhinging the political alignment on which he relies in the Congress, in labor, and in other sectors, with serious effects on the stability of his government. Several of the President's more extreme advisers were reportedly instrumental in persuading Goulart

that such was the case.

[The Brazilian official line abounded in equivocations and contradictions during the crisis week.] Speaking to a student-labor group demonstrating in Rio de Janeiro against Brazil's support of the OAS resolution, Premier Hermes Lima on October 23 upheld Cuba's right to carry out its own political experiment but added paradoxically that the Brazilian Government could not condone actions by Latin American states to borrow from abroad the political formulas needed to carry out their evolution. Commenting on the tense international situation, he blamed the crisis on the quest for prestige among the two rival major powers. Brazil's representative to the OAS was recalled in a move widely interpreted as substantiating Brizzola's charge. However, Premier Hermes Lima subsequently denied publicly that the representative had violated his instructions, and an official notice issued by the Foreign Ministry stated that the Brazilian vote on the OAS resolution was justified by the presence in Cuba "of war materiel of an offensive nature".

In a public statement on October 23, the Brazilian Government stressed that it supported an arms quarantine against Cuba under the Punta del Este resolutions, but not a total blockade of Cuba nor the use of force violating the territorial integrity of a country and jeopardizing world peace. Premier Hermes Lima subsequently apologized to our Ambassador over the apparent contradiction between this statement and Brazil's vote on the October 23 OAS resolution, implying that it was due to severe domestic public opinion pressures. Moreover, both he and President Goulart indicated to the Ambassador that Brazil would support measures in addition to the blockade against Cuba to cause removal or destruction of the missiles, provided they received a prior explanation of the reasons for such action.

On October 25 Goulart addressed a letter to President Kennedy in response to the President's request for Brazilian collaboration to remove the Soviet missile threat to hemispheric security. Goulart's letter, which made only passing reference to Brazil's support of the OAS resolution, dealt at length with his government's espousal of non-violent means to resolve cold war conflicts, defense of the principle of self-determination, and opposition to intervention in an American state "inspired by the alleged incompatibility of its political regime." He criticized the fact that the OAS decision was obtained without a prior on-the-spot investigation in Cuba and an effort to negotiate for Cuban disarmament under a mutual (US-Cuban) guarantee of non-invasion. He lamented that nuclear war was being risked, and urged President Kennedy to avoid military action against Cuba which might aggravate this danger. He pledged Brazilian support for any measures to preserve peace "without

violating respect for sovereignty of peoples." Although the text of this letter has not been made public, its substance was immediately conveyed to news sources in Brazil, including the local Soviet news representative.

Goulart's letter to President Kennedy doubtless reflected his extremist advisers' views of the tactic best calculated to win Brazilian public support for his policy in the Cuban crisis. At the same time, Goulart was almost certainly irritated over President Kennedy's decision to postpone his visit to Brazil in November, as conveyed by his message of October 25 to Goulart. Although he undoubtedly expected this decision because of the crisis and reacted gracefully to it in his public reply, Goulart must have been displeased that it came so soon after the Cuban crisis broke.

He had looked forward to the Kennedy visit as a means to strengthen his political position, to portray his government as the object of US favor, and to seek further US financial assistance to bolster the shaky Brazilian economy.

Brazil's Mediation

Soon after the onset of the crisis Brazilian representatives in the UN began consultations with US and other delegates concerning a proposal to resolve the US-Soviet confrontation over Cuba through an agreement that Africa and Latin America be declared denuclearized zones and therefore off limits for nuclear weapons, bases and tests. A proposal along these lines, submitted to the General Assembly's Political Committee on October 29, reportedly elicited favorable initial responses among representatives of neutral and uncommitted nations, as well as of Cuba, the USSR and the United States.

Following Khrushchev's offer to withdraw the missiles and the announcement that Acting Secretary General U Thant would travel to Cuba for negotiations with Castro, Goulart sent a personal emissary to Havana for talks with the Cuban leader on October 29. Although the exact nature of Brazil's initiative with Castro is not known, Goulart seemingly is seeking the role of a mediator between Cuba and the United States, perhaps by suggesting Cuba's re-entry into the OAS with a Castro guarantee to halt subversive activities in neighboring countries in return for a US non-invasion pledge.

He drew the lines between rival political groups in Brazil even more sharply. Led by Brizola, leftist and ultranationalist spokesmen applauded Goulart's action as a sign of Brazil's political maturity, while moderate and conservative leaders strongly criticized his equivocation and urged a

foreign policy line of support for the United States and the rest of Latin America on Cuba. At the same time, the political waters were further muddied when on October 30 Khrushchev abruptly reversed the stance and attitude the Castro regime had been enjoying by allowing installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba. He went on to say that supporters of the Cuban people's struggle for freedom were not prepared to accept Cuba's transformation into a satellite of the Soviet Union. He censured the Soviet Union for making use of the struggle of the Cuban people for its own ends, simply as an instrument of the cold war. He called on the UN to promote a solution to the crisis which would preserve Cuban self-determination in the face of external pressures from both sides. He also was strongly critical of the US action on Cuba and urged that the Guantanamo naval base be returned to Cuba.